

Draft Syllabus

AFRICAN POLITICS THROUGH LITERATURE , FILM, AND MUSIC

GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY

Mondays, 6:30—9:30.

208-B, INTERCULTURAL CENTER

FALL, 2015.

Professor Herb Howe

howeh@georgetown.edu

Fiction, non-fiction, documentary films, and popular music will help explore major questions about sub-Saharan Africa. These questions include

1. What political-social-religious systems existed in pre-colonial Africa?
2. How did a handful of European countries gain control of most of sub-Saharan Africa and has the “(neo) colonial legacy” proven a mixed blessing or an unmitigated disaster?
3. What moral dilemmas confronted potential opponents to unjust authority and how did those Africans resolve them? Which of our fictional characters do you consider “heroic?”
4. Why did personal rule (“neo-patrimonialism”) become the dominant form of rule following independence and what have been its ramifications?
5. What is “corruption,” why does it remain widespread, and is it necessarily “bad?”
6. What constitutes “terrorism” and under what (if any) conditions can you justify it?
7. What roles has ethnicity played in African politics?

8. Why has sub-Saharan Africa suffered so many coups and conflicts and what are some suggested solutions?
9. How do critics and supporters view Africa's post-1990 democratization? Could democracy be "premature," given the political- social divisions and lack of economic development in many countries?
10. How do songs and films explain African politics.

The required non-fiction **textbook** is Alex Thomson's *An Introduction to African Politics (3rd edition)*.

The **novels** are:

Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*

Mariama Ba, *So Long a Letter*

Okey Ndibe, *Arrows of Rain*

NoViolet Bulawayo, *We Need New Names*

Nguigi wa Thiong'o, *Devil on the Cross* (short sections: no need to purchase).

Andre Brink, *A Dry White Season* (short sections: no need to purchase)

Chinua Achebe, *Man of the People* (short sections: no need to purchase).

Films:

"King Leopold's Ghost,"

"Monday's Girls,"

"This Is Nollywood."

"Battle of Algiers"

"A Dry White Season."

(No need to purchase the films)

Videos Include:

Brenda Fassie, "Mr. President"

Fela, "Zombie" and "Coffin For the Head of State"

Ladysmith Black Mambazu..., "N'kosi Sikili Africa"

Yousou N'Dour and Peter Gabriel, "Shake the Tree"
 Savuka, "Asinbonanga"
 Kigito Mihigo, "Igisobanuro Cy'urupu"

Weekly reading usually will average about two hundred pages, much of which is fiction. Most of the five films run for about an hour. Music videos are fewer than ten minutes. Journal and newspaper articles will provide updates on African politics. Strongly recommended for contemporary news: "Media Review," from the Africa Center For Security Studies and articles from *The Economist*. AllAfrica.com offers up-to-date articles from African newspapers. Assigned articles are available on the Web. Lauinger library will stream the DVDs and will have several of them for borrowing.

"African Politics..." demands significant student participation, which will include an in-class paper presentation by each student. The course also requires a midterm paper of fifteen pages and several quizzes. Class participation (including attendance) counts for 40 percent of the class grade; the paper (*both* the draft and final versions) for 40 percent, and the quizzes for 20 percent. The final draft is due on Saturday, November 21.

Know and follow Georgetown's Honor Code concerning academic integrity. The Code obligates professors to report possible cases of academic dishonesty. See SCS.georgetown.edu/academic-affairs/honor-code.

I will be available before and after each class and *via* e-mail for individual discussions.

WEEK-BY-WEEK SCHEDULE

1. WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 2. INTRODUCTIONS .

Discussion of key terms, including "Africa," "politics," "tribes/ethnic groups" "nations," "states," "nation-states," "imperialism," "charismatic" vs. "institutionalized rule," "corruption," "terrorism," and "democracy."
 Introduction to African literature.

Readings:

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, "The Danger of a Single Story," TEDGlobal, July 2009. Print or YouTube version.

Wangari Maathai, "Culture: The Missing Link?" *The Challenge For Africa*, pp. 160-183

Ian Birrell, "Music Is Vital Political Struggle Across Africa—Not Just In Mali," *The Observer*, January 26, 2013.

Robin Denselow, "Mali: Music Ban By Islamists 'Crushing Culture To Impose Rule," *Guardian*, January 15, 2013.

Donald McNeil, "Killer Songs," *The New York Times*, March 17, 2002.

Dennis McLellan, "Ousmane Sembene, 84: Hailed as the Father of African Film." *Los Angeles Times*, June 17, 2007.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 7. LABOR DAY:NO CLASS.

2. MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 14. OVERVIEW OF AFRICAN LITERATURE AND HISTORY

Readings:

Dorothy Blair, "Foreward," to Birago Diop, *Tales of Amadou Koumba*, pp. ix—xvii.

Ngugi wa Thiongo, "Quest For Relevance," *Decolonizing the Mind*, pp 87-109

Anealie Safdar, "African Fiction Boom Sparks Identity Debate," *Aljazeera*, undated.

Felicia R. Lee, "New Wave of African Writers With An Internationalist Bent," *The New York Times*, June 30, 2014.

Thomas O'Toole, "The Historical Context," *Understanding Contemporary Africa* (third edition), April and Donald Gordon, eds. pp. 23-54.

April and Donald Gordon, "Nationalism and the Politics of Independence," *Understanding Contemporary Africa*, April Gordon and Donald Gordon, eds. pp. 55-80.

John Ruskin, "Imperial Destiny."

3. MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 21. IMPERIALISM AND "THE PACIFICATION OF THE PRIMITIVE TRIBES..."

Things Fall Apart depicts a pre-colonial, acephalous, society and, subsequently, and how British imperialism gained control over it. Okonkwo, a leading citizen of Umuofia, resists the foreigners and meets a tragic end. *Things Fall Apart* became the first

African novel to attract the world's attention: it has sold ten million copies and been turned into several film versions.

We will review Igbo phrases during our September 14th class.

Readings:

Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*.

--, "Chinua Achebe," Bill Moyers, *A World of Ideas*. Television interview.

Optional:

Robert Wren, "Chapter Two: The 'Pacification of Umuofia,'" *Achebe's World*, pp.

23-59. Peter Gomes, "Foreword," in Peter Gibbon, *A Call To Heroism*, pp.

xi-xix.

4. MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 28. THE IMPERIAL ("COLONIAL") IMPACT .

Readings:

Wangari Maathai, "A Legacy of Woes," *The Challenge For Africa*, pp. 25-47.

Crawford Young, "The Heritage of Colonialism," *Africa In World Politics*, John Harbeson and Donald Rothchild, eds. pp. 23-42.

DVDS:

"King Leopold's Ghosts" relates how Belgium's King Leopold devastated Congolese society.

"Monday's Girls" documents a coming-of-age ceremony in southern Nigeria that resisted British imperialism and that has adapted to modern realities.

5. MONDAY, OCTOBER 5. THE LIVES OF TWO WOMEN.

Readings:

Mariama Ba, *So Long A Letter*. Aissatou, a middle-aged woman, reflects on the position of women in the newly-independent West African state of Senegal.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Devil On the Cross*, pp. 76-90 and 242-254. Neo-colonialism ensnarls Kenyans, but Jacinta Wariinga fights her personal war against racism and sexism.

Music Video:

Yousou N'dour and Peter Gabriel, "Shake the Tree"

6. MONDAY, OCTOBER 19. POST-1960 POLITICS AND THE RISE OF PERSONAL RULE.

Readings:

Okey Ndibe, *Arrows of Rain*. *Arrows of Rain* is a modern murder-and-romance story set in a thinly-disguised Nigeria. It helps to answer the “why don’t good people fight against injustice” conundrum.

Chinua Achebe, *Man Of the People*, pp. 109-120.

Alex Thomson, “Legitimacy: Neo-Patrimonialism, Personal Rule, and the Centralisation of the African State” and “Coercion: Military Intervention in African Politics,” *An Introduction to African Politics*, pp. 109--151.

Stephanie Hanson, “Corruption in Sub-Saharan Africa,” Council on Foreign Relations, August 6, 2009.

Neil Spencer, “A Tornado of a Man, but He Loved Humanity,” *The Observer*, October 30, 2010.

Thomas Hobbes, “Of the Naturall Condition of Mankind...” chapter 12, *Leviathan*, pp. 183-188.

Music Videos:

Fela, “Zombie” and “Coffin For the Head of State”

Highly Recommended Reading:

George Orwell, *Animal Farm*. A universalistic and highly readable about the tension between political ideology and human desires.

7. MONDAY, OCTOBER 26. PERSONAL DIFFICULTIES OF RESISTANCE AND TERRORISM.

Readings:

Just War doctrine readings.

Class handout on South African *apartheid*.

—“The Kairos Document,” 1985.

Nelson Mandela, section from “Rivonia,” *Long Walk to Freedom*, pp. 351-378.

Andre Brink, *A Dry White Season*, pp.294-316.

DVD:

A Dry White Season. A middle-aged and complacent white South African realizes the horrors of racism and wrestles with whether and how to oppose it.

Music Videos:

Savuka’s “Asinbonanga”

Ladysmith Black Mambazu, Hugh Masekela and Paul Simon, “Nkosi Sikile Afrika”

Brenda Fassie, “Mr. President”

8. MONDAY, NOVEMBER 2. MILITARY CONFLICT

READINGS:

Material on the Algerian war during the 1950s and Nigeria's Boko Haram of the present day. Herb Howe, "The Roots and Results of African Military Unprofessionalism," *Ambiguous Order: Military Forces in African States*, pp. 27-71.

DVD. "The Battle of Algiers. Algerian rebels in the 1950s use terrorism against brutal French colonialism.

(The course doesn't focus upon the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), but I will discuss it for about ten minutes at the end of tonight's class as a prelude to the upcoming Rwanda section. I highly recommend Jason K. Sterns, "The First War," *Dancing In the Glory of Monsters*, pp 93-181).

8. MONDAY, NOVEMBER 9. RWANDA

Readings:

History

Jeffrey Gettelman, "The Global Elite's Favorite Strongman," *The New York Times*, September 4, 2013.

Awek Uwihanganye, "Rwanda: Gettelman's Ghetto Profile of Kagame...," *New Times* (Kigali), September 23, 2013.

DVDs: "Finding Hillywood." Rwandan film makers reflecting on the need for indigenous narratives of the Rwandan 1994 crisis and its aftermath.

Music Video:

Kizito Mihigo, "Igisobanuro Cy'urupu" ("The Meaning of Death").

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 14, NOONTIME. FIRST DRAFTS DUE VIA EMAIL. This draft of between five and fifteen pages will count for one-half of your paper's grade (and twenty percent of your total grade). Choose your topic of your own choice and discuss it with me. I will return comments to you by noon on Sunday. You will give a *five* minute presentation (followed by *five* minutes of class comments) in class on Monday, November 16. Practice *and* time your presentation before class.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 16. CLASS PRESENTATION. This should be a concise "elevator talk" (more on this later) and an exchange of ideas between the individual presenters and their classmates. Summarize your paper's major points and address the "so-what?" question of importance. This will be a student-run class.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 21. Final papers due by 11 am.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 23. AFRICAN FILM**Reading:**

Magnus, Taylor, "African Cinema: The Five Best Political Films," *Guardian Africa Network*, October 28, 2014.

DVD:

"This Is Nollywood." Ostensibly, this film follows the making of a cops-and-robbers video. But, it carries a larger message of optimism for African development.

11. MONDAY NOVEMBER 30. DESPOTISM, DEMOCRATIZATION, AND THE AFRICAN DIASPORA.**Readings:**

NoViolet Bulawayo, *We Need New Names*. "Darling" and her fellow street urchins witness a dystopian, contemporary Zimbabwe during the book's first half. Darling subsequently travels to America and becomes part of the African diaspora.

John Lee Anderson, "Letter From Zimbabwe: The Destroyer," *New Yorker*, October 27, 2008.

Knox Chityo, "Zimbabwe's Inconvenient Truth," *Guardian*, August 5, 2013.

--,"Angolan Rap. When Money Stops Talking," *Economist*, March 31, 2012.

William Easterly and Yaw Nyarko, "Is the Brain Drain Good For Africa?" *Brookings Global Economy and Development*, Working Paper 19, March 2008, pp. 1-4.

Pamela Constable, "African Immigrant Population Doubling Each Decade...," *Washington Post*, October 1, 2014.

12. MONDAY, DECEMBER 7 THE FUTURE OF AFRICA. WRAPUP AND FINAL QUIZ.**Readings:**

Alex Thomson, "Democracy: Re-Legitimising the African State?" *An Introduction to African Politics*, pp. 243-274.

Scott Straus, "Wars Do End! Changing Patterns of Political Violence in Sub-Saharan Africa," *African Affairs* (111, 443). Afrax.oxfordjournals.org.

---, "Collecting Tax in Africa: Above the Table," *Economist*, April 26, 2014.

Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, Introduction," and Steven Radelet," *Emerging Africa*," and "Challenges and Opportunities on the Road Ahead," *Emerging Africa*, pp. 1-25, 141-159.

Taiye,Selasi, "Bye-Bye Babar," *Lip*, March 5 2005.

Honor Code. MALS and DLS students are responsible for upholding the Georgetown University Honor System and adhering to the academic standards included in the Honor Code Pledge stated below:

In the pursuit of the high ideals and rigorous standards of academic life, I commit myself to respect and uphold the Georgetown University Honor System: To be honest in any academic endeavor; and to conduct myself honorably, as a responsible member of the Georgetown community, as we live and work together.

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